
CONTACT: OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

(916) 657-7202

(916) 657-8639 - FAX

December 17, 1997

97-47

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHP SAYS: TAKE A LITTLE TIME, PREVENT A HOLIDAY TRAGEDY

SACRAMENTO -- California Highway Patrol Commissioner D.O. Helmick urges motorists to buckle up, slow down and designate a driver during the holiday season to prevent a family tragedy.

"It takes only minutes to fasten your safety belt, reduce your speed and select a designated driver, but these three simple actions will prevent injury and death," Helmick said.

In 1996 in California, 1,254 people were killed and 35,654 injured in alcohol-involved collisions. Despite the tragedy of these deaths and injuries, the statistics reflect a steady decline since the early 1980s. "The CHP can't let down its guard," Helmick said. "We have no tolerance for drinking and driving, speeding and ignoring safety belts."

In 1996 during the 30-hour Christmas holiday eight people died in California vehicle crashes. Fourteen people died during the 30-hour New Year's holiday.

For the upcoming holiday period, the CHP will gather all its enforcement and public awareness tools to reduce collisions in the heavy holiday traffic, Helmick said.

- Friday, Dec.19 is the observance of the Lights on For Life, a campaign which features law enforcement vehicles traveling with their lights on all day to

remind motorists not to drink and drive. The shining headlights also commemorate those who lost their lives to drunk drivers.

- The December 1997 Drunk and Drugged Driving (3-D) Prevention Month Campaign urges young adults (21-34) to designate a driver. This age group is more likely to be injured or killed in a holiday accident.
- Two 102-hour maximum enforcement periods will be in effect for the CHP, from 6 p.m. Dec. 24 to midnight Dec. 28 and from 6 p.m. Dec. 31 to midnight Jan. 4. Officers will be out in force to apprehend drunk drivers and to slow speed.
- National Holiday Lifesaver Weekend is another awareness effort to reduce accidents on the heaviest travel weekend before Christmas. This year the weekend will be observed from 6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19 to midnight Dec. 21. Law enforcement agencies from all levels of government participate in the project, sponsored by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.
- The CHP will man sobriety checkpoints on various dates beginning Dec. 20 and extending through to Jan. 4. The 15 sobriety checkpoint locations range from El Centro in the south to the Dunsmuir Grade on the north. In the Sacramento area, a checkpoint will be located Dec. 27 near the City of Auburn.
